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Devoted to The  
High-School-College  
Entrance  
Scholarship Fund

THE NEW YORK

# LATIN LEAFLET

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VOL V

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, MAY 1, 1905

No 124

## Fifteenth Meeting of the Latin Club

The fifteenth regular meeting of the New York Latin Club is called for Saturday May 13, at 12 M, in the Hotel St Denis, corner of Broadway and Eleventh Street, New York. Prof Tracy Peck of Yale, will address the Club. All persons who are interested, whether teachers of Latin or not, are cordially invited to be present. The plan is to serve luncheon at 12 M, promptly, so that there shall be no delay. The address will follow the luncheon, and adjournment will occur about 2 P M, *thus leaving the afternoon still unbroken, for those who attend.* Please send a postal card at once to the Sec'y, Mr A L Hodges, 309 W 101 st, N Y, if you intend to be present, so that we may notify Mr Taylor, the proprietor of the hotel, how many to expect. *Please attend to this at once.*

H H BICE, *President*A L HODGES, *Secretary*

## Notices

It is proposed to amend the Constitution, Art V, Sec 1, so that it will read as follows:

The periodical published under the auspices of the club shall be self-supporting, and not less than twenty-five cents from every annual subscription to the periodical shall be perpetually devoted to the New York High School College Entrance Scholarship Fund.

As Art VII requires a unanimous vote to amend the above section, it is proposed to ask the meeting of May 13 to allow the vote on the amendment to be taken by mail at some time before the first meeting of the coming year.

Acknowledgement will be made in No 125 of all money received for the Scholarship Fund since the last report published in No 113.

## Early Legends and Recent Discoveries

The Latin teacher of the "old school" is beginning to lift up his head once more. Niebuhr smote him that he remained quiescent for a lonesome period and ventured not to make reply to the arrogant claim that the most poetic portion of Roman History is naught but rubbish and a mass of fables which do not even possess the conventional merit of being cunningly devised. But somehow, for some reason, though unable to establish a satisfactory thesis in support of his pets, the Latin instructor has gone on teaching to his pupils the absurdities connected with the founding of Rome and the following years of development. These legends still retained their charm for instructor and instructed even though their actual existence had been ruthlessly and relentlessly torn from their place in literature and in the curricula of the schools.

There was abundant reason why these tales should not give up their power and their life at the behest of German skepticism. In the first place, they had become ingrained in the thought and the life of the people whose progenitors figured in them. This same people developed a literature which strongly influenced the minds of writers in the middle ages throughout the world. And the same old stories still sway the mind and the heart of those who write the books of to-day. For these reasons, because these Roman legends took hold powerfully on the minds of men and lived on in their books, the stories still possess an undeniable value in literary training and are justly entitled to be considered an integral part of a liberal education. Added to these considerations is the fact that the stories have with themselves a charm and a fascination which attract the minds of all persons in whom the constant use of scalpel and anaesthetic has not warped the soul.

And so the untutored pedagogue has gone on in his course, allowing his students to drink of waters which had been plainly proved not to be water at all. Perhaps he closed the book when more erudite teachers visited his school-room, or possibly he put forth the lame excuse that a knowledge of the legends was essential to an understanding of the literature, but, whatever the pretext, he plodded on with a blind and unreasoning faith in his own intuitions.

The last lustrum has brought striking confirmation of the poor pedagogue's instinct against the forces of the higher criticism arrayed in high places. This renaissance has not been restricted to the confines of Italy, for Greece has brought to light even greater marvels. The fact is that the new life is world-wide and reaches to all nations. Extreme skepticism has had its day and is passing to merited oblivion. In its place comes faith, faith in the annals and the credibility of our ancestors, and a readiness to admit that our forefathers must have been at least slightly conversant with conditions which prevailed in their time and that our methods of criticism can not wholly displace their testimony.

Astraea began her return to earth when Heinrich Schliemann commenced to dream that something more than mere moonshine had been transmitted to us from our ancestors. Pride of intellect also received a severe blow when the Mycenaean civilization was bared to our gaze, while in view of the discoveries made in Crete the most graceless materialist in things archaeological must bow in reverence before the past. If the present rate of progress shall be maintained, the half-jesting words of Professor Doerpfeld will yet be found prophetic, that we may even find traces of the argonautic expedition and of the home of the Golden Fleece.

It was near to the close of the last century when it was felt in Italy that the time had come for a more thorough investigation in the regions where antiquity had been known to live. In accordance with this resolution a committee was formed consisting of Giacomo Boni, Professor Lanciani, and Professor Huelsen with some others whose special task should be the prosecution of excavations in the Forum.

It was not long before it became evident that a new dispensation was at hand in the interpretation of the earlier centuries.

The Lapis Niger set all to studying the period which had rested under suspicion, nay, had even been found guilty of non-existence. The cippus was evidently no fraud of later times. Entombed in a remote period, it had rested in its secure hiding-place until the fullness of time when it should be manifested for the undoing of the unbelieving. Besides the fact that the monument must have lain there from an early time there was scattered about many proofs of great antiquity which would admit of neither cavil nor question. The language of the cippus itself furnished the proofs of a hoary antiquity and an unchallenged right to a position among the tribes of Latium.

Straightway the "Italian school" leaped into new life and activity, for under this appellation went those who claimed for their progenitors the respectability of not having presumed too far on the credulity of posterity. These men had been restless under the imputation that so large and so important chapters in their Livy's writings must be relegated to the scrap heap where all truly scientific investigators so scornfully cast what they can not reconcile with their own ideas and ideals. The Italian scholars and those who sympathized with them had felt what they could not prove. But now, with this testimony from the land of mystery, they made a bold stand and asserted their beliefs and their right to be heard even in the presence of their former prosecutors. The battle was spirited but comparatively short. The evidence was too overwhelming. And now one of the most active of the iconoclasts has publicly professed his faith in the antiquity of the monument, admitting that parts at least belong to the "regal period" and claiming for the whole as much authenticity as could be desired by any friend of Romulus. The regal period must be recognized, whatever names may be assigned to it or connected with it. It may yet rise even to the dignity of being printed in the same type which is employed in the school histories for the recital of the "accepted facts."

The discoveries made in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, rich as they are in meaning for a later period, do not immediately concern us in our quest for something to justify a shade more respect for the beginnings of the Empire of Rome. Nor does the Basilica Aemilia touch this particular question. The Curia of Diocletian and the subterranean passages beneath the imperial Forum, interesting as they are in their place, do not quench the thirst of those eager in the pursuit of that which has been altogether behind the veil. And the relationship of Tarquinius to the Cloaca Maxima may also be allowed to rest undisturbed so far as it has any bearing upon the existence real or assumed of that monarch.

Among the later discoveries, however, there are three which approach the Lapis Niger in importance and in antiquity. The first of these in the order of excavation is the Fountain of Juturna.

Of the existence of the fountain there is of course no question, for there it is in plain sight. Its identity is as little open to challenge as the existence of the spring, for the name appears in large print. And its location corresponds to expectations founded on the statements occurring in the pages of Latin authors.

It is not necessary to believe that on this spot Castor and Pollux actually did appear to mortal view and wash their wearied horses in the abundant waters. It is sufficient for the present that we accept this as the spot where the Romans gave their legend a habitation. Whatever historical accuracy or inaccuracy may dwell in the story, it is plain that the legend took a powerful hold on the Roman imagination and led to the rich adornment of the place and the erection close by of a temple which occupied a prominent position in the esteem of Romans belonging both to earlier and to later generations.

The necropolis exhumed in the neighborhood of the Temple of Antonius and Faustina may have some bearing on the early Roman inhabitants of the Palatine and it may not. The graves bear the appearance of being prehistoric. Signor Boni has long cherished the opinion that before the Romans occupied the territory another nation had dwelt there, and he naturally sees in this discovery a confirmation of his favorite hobby. Whether he is justly entitled to that interpretation or not, the graves are old enough to increase our respect for the antiquity of the place as an inhabited region.

It is enough to tax credulity to the utmost to be informed by a grave individual of archaeological tastes that the pit has been discovered into which leaped a horseman who would thus secure the favor of the gods and avert calamity from his fellows. But here again the testimony of engraved letters is not to be easily refuted. It is not necessary to assume that such an occurrence ever really took place, though that is not impossible, for such sacrifices were common enough, and Lanciani has discovered in the records a statement to the effect that a few centuries ago the water-soaked soil in the neighborhood of Santa Maria Liberatrice suddenly gave way and left a deep chasm. A similar opening in the earth might easily have been construed as a manifestation of divine wrath, calling for expiation, and in those days there would have been no lack of volunteers for the privilege of serving their country with their lives.

What effect, then, should these startling discoveries have made upon our ways of thinking with reference to the early period of Roman history? Simply that written records have a value which mere destructive criticism can not destroy without proof of the most convincing sort. In the past we have reversed the ordinary mode of procedure and have compelled the records to prove their existence instead of allowing them to stand until their authenticity could be disproved. We are now forced to a more liberal attitude.

Nothing in the situation forces us to believe that the ships of Aeneas vanished in a supernatural form or that Romulus disappeared into the heavens instead of being slain by an opposing faction. But we must admit that legends are not simply the creations of poets or of poetic historians, and also that legends do not spring from nothing, but always have some basis in fact. The origin of the legend may have been lost in obscurity, but it somewhere has or had a material foundation. The sooner we comprehend that fact, the more accurate will be our conjectures and our interpretation.

The spade of the excavator has taught us more respect for the stories which the Romans told to themselves and to others. F A GALLUP  
WATERTOWN, N Y, February 28